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ON POLITICAL MORALITY

By George Morgenstern

"Character", said Thomas Paine in The Crisis, "is much easier kept than recovered."

The profound simplicity and truth of this observation will appeal to the more sensitive of the citizenry who watch with trepidation the present tortured struggles of the Republic. On every hand the cry is for elevation of the moral plane of government, for a rediscovery of ethics to meet the "moral crisis" of our political life, for the creation of a commission of ethics in the Federal Government, or for the enunciation of a Congressional Ten Commandments. Every second Senator has possessed himself of an old suit of armor and is busy shining it up in order to parade his superior pretensions to virtue before his fellows and the public. Even Mr. Truman has come forward in the role of moral monitor. The accusing finger is invariably pointed at the next fellow.

The most resounding breast-beating comes from the President and members of his Party, for the evident reason that the rascals who get turned out are necessarily those that are in. Temptation assails the party in power because it possesses motive, means and opportunity. These are the conditions prerequisite to successful crime. The motive is political or financial profit, or both. The means consist of command of the easy money and of influence to turn the desired trick. The opportunity resides in a position of dominant political power, which has not been successfully challenged in almost twenty years.

Thus, widespread evidence of crookedness and corruption has accumulated against the Administration. It encompasses the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, the Bureau of Internal Revenue, the Democratic National Committee, numerous other officials and agencies of Government and the White House itself.

II

Mr. Truman and his Party associates, although morally calloused by long apprenticeship in the tutorial school of the late Pendergast and its Chicago, New York and lesser branches, suffer an understandable anxiety. It cannot be called embarrassment, for that feeling is not possible

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in a climate of total moral imperviousness, the distingushing characteristic of the present era of grifters. Even a Fall and a Daugherty were not entirely lacking in a sense of shame, and a Denby, though innocent of wrong-doing, could die of a broken heart when scandal touched his office. Today, when somebody is caught, the rejoinder is, "I didn' do nothin' illegal, and, if I did, prove it."

So Mr. Truman, after his national chairman finds himself in hot water, his departments, bureaus and agencies are caught in cahoots with crooks, and his family fortunes and the fortunes of his hand-picked candidate in the crooked Jackson County Democratic primary of 1946 are improved by the judicious locating of a military air base, thinks that it would be salutary if politicians disclosed their incomes each year.

"Attempts", he says, "have been made through implication and innuendo, and by exaggeration and distortion of the facts in a few cases, to create the impression that graft and corruption are running rampant through the whole government. . . . I am told that people all around the country are getting a mistaken and distorted impression that the government is full of evil-doers, full of men and women with low standards of morality, full of people who are lining their own pockets and disregarding the public interest. This is a terrible distortion of the real facts about our government."

Compare that with the statement of President Coolidge on Teapot Dome, January 26, 1925: "If there has been any crime it must be prosecuted. If there has been any property of the United States illegally transferred or leased it must be recovered. . . . Counsel will be instructed to prosecute these cases in the courts so that if there is any guilt it will be punished; if there is any civil liability it will be enforced; if there is any fraud, it will be revealed; and if there are any contracts that are illegal, they will be cancelled. Every law will be enforced, and every right of the people and the government protected."

Mr. Truman obviously feels that justice, honesty and decency are beside the point. He feels that attack is the best defense. "White House aides, furnishing copies of the message to reporters before it was read at the Capitol, obviously were delighted", we are informed, "with the President's political strategy."

III

On the same day that Mr. Truman demonstrated this subtle sense of strategy, Senator William Benton of Connecticut, former partner of the ineffable Chester Bowles in the allied huckstering arts of advertis-

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ing and ballyhoo, presented himself before a stacked subcommittee to call for the expulsion of Senator Joseph R. McCarthy of Wisconsin. Mr. Benton had qualified himself as a expositor of moral standards in government in the receptive columns of the New York Times Magazine, issue of August 12, wherein he registered well-simulated indignation over Senator McCarthy's efforts to obtain something approximating an investigation of charges that various people in and about the State Department were not unsympathetic to the Communist cause.

Mr. McCarthy, who used to fire a machine gun out of the tail end of a Marine Corps plane, has a positive gift for upsetting the sensibilities of Communists, members of the Truman persuasion and refined intellectuals not above sharing martinis and scones with the first two classes. Besides, he had had a part in giving dear old Millard Tydings the dear old heave-ho in Maryland. The very mention of "McCarthyism" will cause a legion of editorial writers in a hundred scattered Fair Deal mosques to start beating out standardized denunciations.

To give Mr. McCarthy his due, he is somewhat rough in his approach, but he fought his country's enemies in one war and he is fighting those he conceives to be its enemies now, and it is not a job to be undertaken wearing a velvet suit and a Buster Brown collar. The Senator has the belief that Communists are rather more dangerous even than crooks in government, and that neither would be tolerated unless favored by a moral corrosion in high places.

Mr. Benton, pursuing the Truman line that aggressive action may at least result in a blocked kick, offered a brief against Mr. McCarthy founded on the premise that although there may be nothing necessarily wrong about Communists, or those who protect Communists, or those who, consciously or unconsciously, play the Communists' game, there is everything wrong about Senators who are so indelicate as to discuss these matters. Mr. Benton is most righteous in his posture, but the public is not informed what Sunday School medals he is entitled to wear. All that appears in the record is that, in his advertising days, he fostered a large number of radio operas occasioning a vast corruption of the public taste, and that as a promoter of piped-in music and encylopaedia sets he added to a very large fortune, most of it accumulated before he began imposing the present tax rates on his fellow citizens.

The activities of Mr. Truman and Mr. Benton demonstrates a very real concern over the issue of morals now before the country. They have adopted the standard legal maxim, "If you have no case, abuse the prose-

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cuting attorney." By this device, the defendant seeks to convey the illusion that he is the plaintiff.

It may work, but only if the people forget the maxims laid down by that great master of the moral law, Mr. Roosevelt. On February 24, 1932, long before his $200,000 telephone conversation with the late John Hartford, Mr. Roosevelt delivered himself of various dicta in reference to the removal of Thomas A. Farley as sheriff of New York County.

"Passive acquiescence by unthinking people in the actions of those who shrewdly turn to personal advantage the opportunities offered by public office", said he, "is out of step with modern ideals of government and with political morality. Such personal gain is not to be excused because it is accompanied by the respondent's popularity of person and great public generosity. Public office should inspire private financial integrity. . . . The State must expect compliance with these standards because if popular government is to continue to exist it must in such matters hold its stewards to a stern and uncompromising rectitude. It must be a just but a jealous master. Public office means serving the public and nobody else."

IV

Mr. Roosevelt could hardly have expressed the indicated sentiments better, and it is a pity that he and his clan did not keep them sufficiently in mind to restrain themselves from commercializing the White House as never before. One phrase in particular stands out: the thought that the venal conduct of officeholders is in no wise extenuated by displays of "public generosity".

When one contemplates the record of a political succession now extending through its fifth term in office, the thought inescapably occurs that no voting segment useful to the formation of a majority amalgam has been neglected in the distribution of favors. The Administration has paid the people a commission for the privilege of robbing them, and to date both sides seem satisfied. This is the really terrible consequence of the decay of political morals. The victim has been corrupted by the victimizer.

As Paine remarked, virtue is more easily kept than recovered. If it has been lost, it is because the people have forgotten that the politician is their natural enemy. Of all evils, according to Cicero, ambition and the disputes to public posts are the most deplorable. The man who seeks position, power and privilege will promise anything and stop at nothing to attain his desire. Once installed, he will defend his advantage with every blandishment and bribe which the people themselves have placed within his reach.

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Not Merely Gossip *A Supplement to* Human Events Vol. VIII, No. 42

By Frank C. Hanighen October 17, 1951

CORRUPTION: In the past 72 hours, discussion among observers here has risen from cautious speculation to what amounts to fever heat. It is no longer disputed that the Administration, because of the revelations concerning Boyle, Finnegan, et al, is in a mess. The only question is whether the slime has risen to a waist-high level or is approaching "neck deep".

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For some months the Internal Revenue Bureau scandals attracted little attention, except among knowledgeable experts who move in the world of finance. Even they doubted that cases against Revenue collectors in New England or on the Pacific Coast would be allowed to develop into a truly national affair. It was assumed -- and correctly -- that the "little fellows" were being consigned to the dogs, and in an effectively dispersed fashion. But when "Bill" Boyle, National Chairman of the Democratic Party, was permitted to resign, some here believed last Sunday and Monday that the limit had been reached. It was argued that the supreme sacrifice had been made. The White House has thereby given up one of its own. Ne plus ultra.

However, by Tuesday, the intense speculation was still continuing and in the past 24 hours there spread through Capitol Hill the feeling that higher levels than the National Committee were in danger. Somewhere, in a trial or investigation committee, a trail would be uncovered leading to the most tenebrous and well-protected area in the White House.

The name of a former White House official is mentioned, and few in a position to know deny that he must be "mixed up in all this". In our own opinion, we find it difficult to believe that this person will not be "protected". But there are many in the corridors and cloakrooms who assert that things have gone so far that even "he" cannot be shielded.

Where is this figure? We were under the impression that he had gone abroad. But one of the correspondents of HUMAN EVENTS 'phoned the office to report that he had got on the man's trail, that in fact he had recently been registered at a hotel in a prominent watering-place which is almost completely deserted at this time of year; that the hotel managers (who did not recognize the importance of their guest) said that he had a companion and described the latter as "the bodyguard". Then the former official disappeared.

(The reader should be reminded that the present revelation of Government scandals has reached the stage when true melodrama may well reign. In the Twenties, suicides and at least one alleged murder followed the probes. We recall the mysterious death of Jesse Smith, the intimate of ousted Attorney General Harry Daugherty.)

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BEHIND THE FIGHT AGAINST McCARRAN: The return of Henry Wallace to the Democratic Party is the grand design of the assault on Senator McCarran's Internal Security Committee and few political observers in this town doubt it.

The fight is being waged behind a smoke screen of alleged historical research by Fair Deal organs and Columnist Joseph Alsop, long-time apologist for the Roosevelt and Truman foreign policy. This fallacious interpretation of history was exposed in HUMAN EVENTS last week by Freda Utley, author of The China Story. The underlying objective of this Administration offensive is to apply a preliminary coat of whitewash to the former Vice-President, so that in the course of the year he may be received back into the ruling Party as an innocent victim of "McCarthyism". No one knows better than the White House political strategists the importance of this maneuver. For Wallace in 1948, by his campaign for the Presidency, deducted many votes from the Democratic ticket (votes drawn mainly from the pro-Communist

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elements) and thereby threw the states of New York, Michigan and Maryland -- a total of 74 electoral votes -- into the Republican column. Wallace, it is said, is willing and eager to return to the Democratic fold.

But one Democrat has moved to spoil this game. Senator McCarran, who is one of the most powerful Democratic figures in the Senate, arose to point out that resistance to Communism and its allies should be bipartisan. His short speech last Friday in the Senate (Congressional Record, October 12, page 13353) has been unfortunately overlooked by most of the press. In it, he pointed out that the present assault on his Internal Security Committee is spearheaded by an attempt to show that Professor Louis Budenz, a star witness in the hearings, is a perjurer. Yet Budenz was the Administration's star witness in the prosecution of the 11 Communist leaders -- the Administration's long publicized move to demonstrate that it is wholeheartedly anti-Communist. The 11 leaders were convicted and some are now in jail.

"You cannot have your cake and eat it", McCarran warned in his speech. "The Government cannot build its case against the Communists upon the fully substantiated testimony of Mr. Budenz and then have some of its spokesmen turn around and denounce him as a perjurer. Such actions provide grist for the Red mill of Communism."

Then McCarran read into the record pieces and editorials from the Daily Worker of recent dates showing how the Communists are concentrating their attacks on Budenz in order to free their leaders now in prison. The titles of these pieces are instructive: "Wallace Says He Supported Chiang in 1944"; "Senator Lehman Reads Charges Senators Helped Budenz Lie" (this refers to the attempt by the New York Senator to put the Alsop version of history into the record), "Lamont Backs Move to Probe Budenz' Lies".

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TAX BILL IMBROGLIO: The astonishing defeat of the tax bill yesterday in the House of Representatives deserves deeper consideration than is being given it today in the atmosphere of a "groggy morning after". From the Right comes the claim that it was all a revolt against spending; from the Left, that the measure fell because it "soaked the poor".

Actually, the upset and its causes appear to us as no great mystery. Principally it signified a breakdown of Administration control of Congress. In the past, whatever else among legislative measures might founder, some working majority was always summoned to pass the tax bill. Hoary veterans cannot recall any defeat of a tax bill after conferees of both Houses had reached agreement.

(Some index of this failure of the Administration to control Congress has been seen during the past week in the matter of Ambassador Jessup's appointment. Two weeks ago, Administration leaders were confident that Jessup would be easily confirmed by the Senate. At this date, the appointment has run into serious trouble.)

Since the tax bill was rejected yesterday by votes of both Right and Left, a parallel with parliamentary situations abroad is suggested. In Europe, when both Right and Left are too strong for the Center, then electricity is indeed in the air. We may draw the conclusion that today discontent in the constituencies has generated "something" strong enough to shake Congress -- significantly on the all-important matter of taxes.

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THAT JAPANESE TREATY: Senator Jenner is at it again. He has asked Acheson if the State Department has made any secret commitments with the Japanese as to "treaties or agreements between Japan and Red China under the Japanese Peace Treaty". Then the Indiana Senator added: "I am reliably informed that you intimated to the Prime Minister of Japan, in connection with his visit here for the signing of the Japanese treaty, that if he entered into a treaty with Red China you would interpose no ob-

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jection, but that you did discourage his entering into a treaty with the Chinese Nationalists."

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KOREA: No end of the fighting in sight. Military observers here take restrained satisfaction from successful U.S. action on the East-Central and West-Central fronts. The same attitude goes for the damage inflicted on the enemy MIGs. But, it is emphasized, our own air force on the Far Eastern front is strained and it is believed that we are outnumbered in jets. Finally, pessimists among military men do not like the trial display of rockets which the enemy made the other day. These weapons are of a distinctly offensive nature, usually employed at the beginning of a big drive.

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STASSEN: Those who express surprise at the new tack of former Governor Harold Stassen have overlooked an old and little-noticed association. Washington observers recall (1) that the leader of the Wisconsin GOP machine is Tom Coleman, a prominent supporter of the Stassen bid for nomination in 1948; (2) that Senator Joe McCarthy, a favorite of Coleman, led the Stassen delegation to the GOP convention that year in Philadelphia; (3) that three months ago, Senator McCarthy participated in the meeting of Stassen leaders which took place in Princeton, New Jersey, as the Stassen-for-President movement reached a new low in prestige; and (4) that recently -- a fact not publicized -- Stassen had a conference with Senator McCarthy in Washington.

Has the versatile man from Minnesota decided that "McCarthyism" is irresistible and that he might well ride the tide? Already, his name is being proposed as a Vice-Presidential candidate with Taft. By the way, Taft -- in announcing his candidacy yesterday -- designated Coleman as a member of his campaign committee.

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PRESIDENTIAL POLLS: A few days before he announced his candidacy, Senator Taft had a humorous exchange with a reporter. The reporter asked him if a possible GOP ticket might be "Taft and MacArthur". The Senator laughingly said, "Or MacArthur and Taft."

Sentiment among Republicans seems to show the same ambivalent tendency as the Senator's wisecrack. Last month, in the Manchester (N.H.) Union Leader's poll, MacArthur ran just ahead of Taft. And now a poll taken by Congressman Lawrence Smith in the 1st District of Wisconsin comes out with Taft leading and MacArthur a good second. This district is normally Republican, about half rural and half urban-industrial, containing the manufacturing cities of Racine, Kenosha, Beloit and Janesville. Out of a total of 378 ballots cast, Taft took 180, MacArthur 140, Eisenhower 34, Stassen 21 and Dirksen 3.

The outcome of a straw vote taken by the Republican Roundup Committee of Chicago is somewhat similar. The Chicago organization polled delegates to the 1948 GOP convention. As reported in the Chicago Tribune, here is the way the leaders finally placed, on a "batting average" percentage basis in which a perfect score of 1,000 would be given the man who was first choice of everyone: Senator Taft -- .377; General MacArthur -- .223; General Eisenhower -- .145; Dirksen -- .144; Stassen -- .042; Warren -- .034; Byrd -- .010.

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BOOK FRONT: The most explosive book of the fall season, it is believed, will be a partial reprint in book form of Senator Joseph McCarthy's 60,000-word speech of last spring attacking General George C. Marshall. The conclusion of the manuscript, we gather, has been amended to some extent, but the book remains much the same. As this column said several months ago, "It is topical, scholarly, fluent and lively." The Devin-Adair Company is the courageous house of issue and the book should appear before many weeks.

---- Bill Buckley's book, God and Man at Yale, has just been published and this extraordinary volume is already having an extraordinary reception. Those who hear

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the talk in the book trade say that it is "packed with dynamite" and should soon be climbing up the list of best-sellers.

Readers of HUMAN EVENTS will recall Mr. Buckley's ironical piece of May 16 (of which we have sold thousands of reprints), and its criticism of collectivist teaching in Yale. We learn from those who get about in New Haven that the Yale authorities, warned in advance by Mr. Buckley's piece in HUMAN EVENTS, at first decided to give the book the "silent treatment". But in the last 30 days, the Yale authorities (possibly fearful of the book's effect on Yale's $80 million drive for funds) have decided to fight it with every weapon at hand. Here looms what may prove an even bigger controversy than that of "the Pasadena story", and on much the same issue. (We shall review God and Man at Yale in our next week's number.)

---- Jesse Jones in his memoirs, Fifty Billion Dollars, (MacMillan, out this week) says: "Regardless of his oft-repeated statement, 'I hate war', he [Roosevelt] was eager to get into the fighting since that would insure a third term."

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MAGAZINE FRONT: Gene Lyons shows up in detail in the American Legion Magazine how notorious Communists and fellow-travellers have been protected by great ballyhoo about "civil rights" while true Americans who seek to expose the Communist network are smeared and subjected to organized persecution. (HUMAN EVENTS lifted the curtain on this crying scandal in this column on August 29.) The Lyons piece appears in the September number of the Legion organ. (For reprints, write to the American Legion Magazine, 580 Fifth Avenue, New York 19, N. Y.)

For a good critique of General Eisenhower, see the article by Lawrence Brown in The Freeman, September 24. (For reprints, address The Freeman, 240 Madison Avenue, New York, N. Y.)

Kenneth de Courcy, in his Intelligence Digest (Empire State Building, New York N. Y.) shows up the almost unbelievable corruption in the British Labor Party.

Announced: a reprinting of Packaged Thinking for Women, a classic in the study of the Administration's thought control system, by Lucille Cardin Crain (editor of The Educational Reviewer) and Anne Burrows Hamilton. We devoted some notice to this work when it first appeared in the late, lamented quarterly American Affairs. Now it may be obtained by writing "Package Thinking", P.O. Box 380, Grand Central Station, New York 17, N. Y.)

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READER WRITES: "Herman S. . . . has a small motor repair business, housed in a little shop outside his back door. . . . His charges are nominal, far less than those of his only competitor, a large concern. . . . An agent of the Office of Price Stabilization came down on Herman with the accusation that he was undercharging, and insisted that he could not be rendering the services he claimed to be rendering at these low prices. The agent also found that H. S. was violating the law: he had not posted ceiling prices. Several times the OPS called him to their office; they also demanded to see his accounts of record, which are mostly in his head. The latest demand on him is to come to Washington for an investigation, at his own expense. He had to hire a lawyer. Poor Herman is going out of his mind. One day he told the OPS men 'I'll go out of business.' 'Not without our permission', they replied. . . . What and who is behind this persecution? Is it the large competitor? The labor union? Or, is it just the meanness inherent in a bureaucrat?"

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ERRATUM: In the heading of last week's "Analysis", there appeared a serious typographical error. As sent to subscribers it read "No. 42, Issue Number 403, October 17, 1951." This should read "No. 41, Issue Number 402, October 10, 1951."

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